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International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2016, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its seventy-first session the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 8th and 9th meetings, on 11 and 13 October. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records.[1]

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/71/20).

4. At its 1st meeting, on 29 September, the Committee decided to establish a Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, chaired by the delegation of Canada, to prepare proposals to be submitted under the item.

5. At the 8th meeting, on 11 October, the Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of that Committee.

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.2/Rev.1

6. At the 12th meeting, on 19 October, the representative of Canada, in his capacity as representative of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole,

[1] A/C.4/71/SR.8 and A/C.4/71/SR.9.

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introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/71/L.2/Rev.1).

7. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

8. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.2/Rev.1 without a vote (see para. 9).

III. Recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

9. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 51/122 of 13 December 1996, 54/68 of 6 December 1999, 59/2 of 20 October 2004, 61/110 and 61/111 of 14 December 2006, 62/101 of 17 December 2007, 62/217 of 22 December 2007, 65/97 of 10 December 2010, 65/271 of 7 April 2011, 66/71 of 9 December 2011, 67/113 of 18 December 2012, 68/50 of 5 December 2013, 68/74 and 68/75 of 11 December 2013, 69/85 of 5 December 2014, 70/82 of 9 December 2015 and 70/230 of 23 December 2015,

Emphasizing the significant progress in the development of space science and technology and their applications that has enabled humans to explore the universe, and the extraordinary achievements made in space exploration efforts, including deepening the understanding of the planetary system and the Sun and the Earth itself, in the use of space science and technology for the benefit of all humankind and in the development of the international legal regime governing space activities,

Recognizing, in that regard, the unique platform at the global level for international cooperation in space activities represented by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee and assisted by the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat,

Emphasizing the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE+50), to be commemorated in 2018, which will be an opportunity to consider the current status and chart the future of the contribution of the Committee to global governance of outer space activities, and for which the Committee and its subsidiary bodies have made progress in the preparatory work for their thematic sessions in 2018,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of all humankind in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space, as the province of all humankind, for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of international law, including the relevant norms of international space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space in order to meet emerging new challenges, especially for developing countries,

Seriously concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space, and bearing in mind the importance of article IV of the Treaty on Principles Governing

the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies,[1]

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the prevention of an arms race in outer space with a view to promoting and strengthening international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Deeply concerned about the fragility of the space environment and the challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, in particular the impact of space debris which is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the development of peaceful space exploration and applications as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, and the importance of further developing the legal framework to strengthen international cooperation in space,

Convinced that space science and technology and their applications, including satellite communications, Earth observation systems and satellite navigation technologies, provide indispensable tools for viable long-term solutions for sustainable development and can contribute more effectively to efforts to promote the development of all countries and regions of the world, and stressing in that regard the need to harness the benefits of space technology towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[2]

Seriously concerned about the devastating impact of disasters,[3] and desirous of enhancing international coordination and cooperation at the global level in disaster management and emergency response through greater access to and use of space-based services and geospatial information for all countries and facilitating capacity-building and institutional strengthening for disaster management, in particular in developing countries,

Firmly convinced that the use of space science and technology and their applications in areas such as tele-health, tele-education, disaster management, environmental protection, natural resources management and ocean and climate monitoring contribute to achieving the objectives of the global conferences of the United Nations that address various aspects of economic, social and cultural development, particularly poverty eradication,

Deeply concerned about the devastating effects of infectious diseases, including Ebola virus disease, to the detriment of human life, society and development, and urging the international community to enhance the role of space-based solutions, in particular tele-epidemiology, in monitoring, preparedness and response activities,

Recalling the fact that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, recognized the important role that space science and technology play in promoting sustainable development,[4]

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843.

[2] Resolution 70/1.

[3] The term "disasters" refers to natural or technological disasters.

[4] Resolution 66/288, annex, para. 274.

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fifty-ninth session,[5]

1. *Endorses* the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fifty-ninth session,[5] with the exception of the annex thereto, which, together with a preambular text and a second set of guidelines, will form a full compendium of guidelines, to be adopted by the Committee and referred to the General Assembly in 2018;[6]

2. *Agrees* that the Committee, at its sixtieth session, should consider the substantive items recommended at its fifty-ninth session,[7] taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

3. *Notes* that, at its fifty-fifth session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee continued its work,[8] as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/82;

4. *Agrees* that the Legal Subcommittee, at its fifty-sixth session, should consider the substantive items and reconvene the working groups recommended by the Committee,[9] taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

5. *Urges* States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space[10] to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties in accordance with their national law, as well as incorporating them into their national legislation;

6. *Notes with satisfaction* that the space law curriculum developed by the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat and published in all official languages of the United Nations could encourage further studies within States in cooperation with relevant entities in support of capacity-building efforts in space law and policy;

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[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20).

[6] The annex to the report of the Committee, entitled "Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities: first set", is not submitted to the General Assembly for action. The preambular text and the second set of guidelines are still to be completed to form a full compendium of guidelines, which is to be referred to the Assembly at its seventy-third session, in 2018 (see paras. 133-137 of the report).

[7] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), para. 318.

[8] Ibid., chap. II.C; and A/AC.105/1113.

[9] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), paras. 212-214.

[10] Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 672, No. 9574); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 961, No. 13810); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1023, No. 15020); and Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1363, No. 23002).

7. *Notes* that, at its fifty-third session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee continued its work,[11] as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/82;

8. *Agrees* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its fifty-fourth session, should consider the substantive items and reconvene the working groups recommended by the Committee,[12] taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

9. *Reiterates* the importance of information-sharing in discovering, monitoring and physically characterizing potentially hazardous near-Earth objects to ensure that all countries, in particular developing countries with limited capacity in predicting and mitigating a near-Earth object impact, are aware of potential threats, emphasizes the need for capacity-building for effective emergency response and disaster management in the event of a near-Earth object impact, and notes with satisfaction the establishment of and work carried out by the International Asteroid Warning Network and the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group to implement the recommendations for an international response to the near-Earth object impact threat, with the support of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, serving as the permanent secretariat of the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group;[13]

10. *Declares* 30 June International Asteroid Day to observe each year at the international level the anniversary of the Tunguska impact over Siberia, Russian Federation, on 30 June 1908 and to raise public awareness about the asteroid impact hazard;

11. *Notes with appreciation* that some States are already implementing space debris mitigation measures on a voluntary basis, through national mechanisms and consistent with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee and with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,[14] endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/217, and invites other States to implement, through relevant national mechanisms, the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;

12. *Considers* that it is essential that States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, especially those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, also considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, and agrees that international

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[11] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), chap. II.B; and A/AC.105/1109.

[12] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), paras. 145-147.

[13] Ibid., para. 119; ibid., *Seventieth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/70/20), para. 153; ibid., *Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/68/20), para. 144; and A/AC.105/1038, para. 198, and annex III.

[14] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/62/20), annex.

cooperation is needed to expand appropriate and affordable strategies to minimize the impact of space debris on future space missions;

13. *Urges* all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes;

14. *Requests* the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and agrees that the Committee should continue to consider the broader perspective of space security and associated matters that would be instrumental in ensuring the safe and responsible conduct of space activities, including ways to promote international, regional and interregional cooperation to that end;

15. *Decides* to convene, within existing resources, a joint half-day panel discussion of the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee) and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to constitute a joint contribution by the First and Fourth Committees to the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, and to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-second session, under the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", a sub-item entitled "Joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability";[15]

16. *Notes with satisfaction* that the Committee, at its fifty-ninth session, agreed on seven thematic priorities of UNISPACE+50, including their objectives and mechanisms;[16]

17. *Emphasizes* the central role of the Office for Outer Space Affairs in fostering capacity-building in the use of space science and technology and their applications and in providing assistance to developing countries, at their request, in the development of national space policy and legislation in conformity with international space law, as well as in the strengthening of institutional capacity in space activities, and urges all Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Programme on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in order to enhance the capacity of the Office to provide technical and legal advisory services in its priority thematic areas;

18. *Notes with satisfaction* the workshops and symposiums held by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in 2016, and requests the Office to continue to apprise the Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee, at their respective sessions held in 2017, of the status of its capacity-building activities;[17]

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[15] Ibid., *Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), para. 273; and A/AC.105/1113, annex I, para. 19 (c).

[16] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), para. 296.

[17] Ibid., para. 60. See also A/AC.105/1107, annex II, and resolution 70/230.

19. *Recognizes* the capacity-building activities under the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, which provide unique benefits for Member States, in particular developing countries, participating in those activities;

20. *Notes with satisfaction* the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), and recognizes the significant achievements made and the advisory support provided to 38 Member States within the framework of UN-SPIDER since its establishment in 2006[18] with the valuable contributions of its network of regional support offices, and encourages Member States, on a voluntary basis, to provide the programme with the additional resources necessary to address the increasing demand for support successfully and in a timely manner;

21. *Reiterates* the importance of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030,[19] in which the value of space-based technology and Earth observation for disaster management and emergency response is recognized, and notes with satisfaction the efforts of the Office for Outer Space Affairs and its UN-SPIDER programme towards promoting international cooperation as a way to enhance the use of space-based technologies and related services at the national and local levels;

22. *Notes with satisfaction* the continuous progress made by the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems with the support of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, in its capacity as executive secretariat of the International Committee, towards achieving compatibility and interoperability among global and regional space-based positioning, navigation and timing systems and in the promotion of the use of global navigation satellite systems and their integration into national infrastructure, particularly in developing countries, and notes with appreciation that the International Committee will hold its eleventh meeting in Sochi, Russian Federation, from 6 to 11 November 2016;

23. *Notes with appreciation* that the regional centres for space science and technology education, affiliated to the United Nations, namely, the African regional centres for space science and technology education in the French and English languages, located in Morocco and Nigeria, respectively, the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Asia and the Pacific, located in China, the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, located in India, the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, with campuses located in Brazil and Mexico, and the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Western Asia, located in Jordan, have continued their education programmes in 2016, encourages the regional centres to continue to promote greater participation of women in their education programmes, and agrees that the regional centres should continue to report to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on their activities;

24. *Emphasizes* that regional and interregional cooperation in the field of space activities is essential to strengthen the peaceful uses of outer space, assist States in the development of their space capabilities and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[2] to that end

[18] Resolution 61/110.

[19] Resolution 69/283, annex II.

requests relevant regional organizations and their groups of experts to offer the assistance necessary so that countries can carry out the recommendations of regional conferences, and in that regard notes the importance of the equal participation of women in all fields of science and technology;

25. *Recognizes*, in that regard, the important role played by organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization and the European Space Agency and by conferences and other mechanisms such as the African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum and the Space Conference of the Americas in strengthening regional and international cooperation among States;

26. *Emphasizes* the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, including strengthening sustainable spatial data infrastructure at the regional and national levels and building resilience to reduce the consequences of disasters, in particular in developing countries;

27. *Reiterates* the need to promote the benefits of space technology and its applications in the major United Nations conferences and summits for economic, social and cultural development and related fields, and recognizes that the fundamental significance of space science and technology and their applications for global, regional, national and local sustainable development processes should be promoted in the formulation of policies and programmes of action and their implementation, including through efforts towards achieving the objectives of those conferences and summits and in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

28. *Encourages* Member States, to that end, to promote the inclusion in those conferences, summits and processes of the relevance of space science and technology applications and the use of space-derived geospatial data, with the involvement of the Office for Outer Space Affairs;

29. *Encourages* the Office for Outer Space Affairs to take active part in those conferences, summits and processes, and other activities in support of the objectives of UNISPACE+50, as appropriate, and to conduct capacity-building activities, hold lectures and participate in academic and research activities to foster international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space;

30. *Urges* the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space), under the leadership of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, to continue to examine how space science and technology and their applications could contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and encourages entities of the United Nations system to participate, as appropriate, in UN-Space coordination efforts;

31. *Encourages* the Office for Outer Space Affairs to continue to conduct capacity-building and outreach activities associated with space security and transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, as appropriate, and within the context of the long-term sustainability of outer space activities;

32. *Decides* that New Zealand shall become a member of the Committee;[20]

33. *Endorses* the decision of the Committee to grant permanent observer status to the International Air Transport Association;[21]

34. *Encourages* the regional groups to promote active participation in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies by the States members of the Committee that are also members of the respective regional groups.

[20] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/71/20), para. 313.

[21] Ibid., para. 315.